been earmarked for the North-Eastern States including Tripura. The State-wise allocation has not been finalized.

Flow of the ten per cent plan funds to NE States

5605. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a policy decision was taken for ensuring flow of 10 per cent of the plan fund of all ministries for North-East region to ensure speedy development;

(b) if so, whether this decision is being implemented;

(c) what yardstick has been adopted by his ministry for sub-allocation of this 10 per cent fund among the North- East State;

(d) whether his Ministry has communicated to the Government of North-East States the yardstick adopted by it for sub-allocation of this 10 per cent fund; and

(e) out of this 10 per cent fund what proportion is sanctioned for Tripura State?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUNDER LAL PATWA): (a) to (e) Ten per cent of the Plan funds for Rural Development Programmes of this Ministry have been earmarked in BE 2000-01 for North-East region. The State-wise allocation has not been finalised.

Backward districts in rural areas

5606. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the measures taken to segregate the backward districts which could not prosper despite special provisions; and

(b) the action proposed to develop such rural areas ensuring the basic minimum standards of infrastructure for such rural poor people justifying rural development on a priority basis for such areas?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUNDER LAL PATWA): (a) A Committee (headed by Principal Adviser, Planning Commission) was constituted in 1997 to, *inter alia*, identify the 100 most backward/poorest districts in the country. The broad parameters adopted by the Committee to analyse the cause of backwardness, included indicators of deprivation (poverty ratio) and social and economic infrastructure. The

100 most backward/poorest districts identified by the Committee included 38 districts in Bihar, 19 districts in Madhya Pradesh, 17 districts in Uttar Pradesh, 10 districts in Maharashtra, 4 districts each in Orissa and West Bengal, 2 districts each in Rajasthan and Sikkim and 1 district each in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Sarma Committee's Report has since been circulated to all the States/UTs for comments.

(b) The Ministry of Rural Development are implementing programmes pertaining, *inter alia*, to poverty alleviation, employment generation, infrastructure development, watershed schemes, social security and land reforms, with a view to improve the quality of life in the rural areas and assist people below the poverty line. These programmes are being closely monitored and are being evaluated from time to time. The programmes implemented for the development of backward areas have helped in improving the living conditions in these areas.

Setting up a Watershed Development Mission

5607. SHRI RAM KUMAR ANAND: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan to set up a Watershed Development Mission to enhance work on watershed development all over the country;

(b) if so, the details of such plans;

(c) whether it is a fact that Government have not coordinated and well monitored plan to develop watersheds in the country;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether Government have also been observing watershed development in different States; and

(f) if so, the major administrative weaknesses in watershed development?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) to (f) At present, there is no plan to set up a Watershed Development Mission. The work on watershed development in the rural areas is undertaken with area development approach on project basis through Zilla Parishads (ZPs)/District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) under the three main programmes namely Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), Desert Development Programme (DDP) and Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP), as per the "Guidelines on